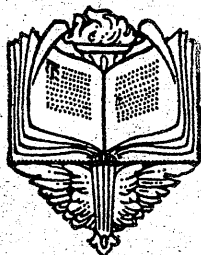


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THE PULPIT COMMITTEE



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THE PULPIT COMMITTEE

By **CHARLES A. McALPINE**

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THE PULPIT COMMITTEE

I

THE PROBLEM

Weakness of the Present System

UNDENIABLY one of the most difficult problems in the practical affairs of denominations organized under a democratic form of church government relates to the settlement of pastors. Many men think it the weakest spot in congregational church polity.

At present there is no universally accepted method of procedure and no standard "code" in accordance with which the negotiations between committee and candidate are conducted. To this cause may reasonably be attributed the frequent misunderstandings and the many heartaches which increase the already keen dissatisfaction with haphazard ways.

Leakage of Efficiency

The total loss of efficiency, due in part to present methods, would be impressive if all the facts were obtainable. Every one familiar with the situation

has known of, not one, but many, churches which have been pastorless six months or more at a time, and not a few whose pastorless condition has continued for two or more years.

In one denomination within the limits of a single State, during one year fifty churches changed pastors, averaging four months between pastorates, involving a total of over sixteen years of leaderless, partially disorganized, and unaggressive church life. This was in an average State, in a normal year, and under ordinary conditions. In another State of the same denomination, thirty-nine churches changed pastors out of a total of ninety-six.

There can be no doubt that a total of hundreds of years of leadership to the churches is lost annually through pastoral changes in each of several denominations.

It is not claimed that this loss can be eliminated entirely; and the wide distribution of loss modifies the situation greatly. But when it is remembered that had these churches been Methodist churches, for example, the loss would have been almost, if not quite, nil, it becomes us to inquire whether a large percentage of this leakage of efficiency cannot be stopped.

Not only did the kingdom lose so much leadership; but there were, at the same time, hundreds of pastors losing each from one to twelve months' service; while the closing months of every pastorate counted for little or nothing in constructive work.

We believe it is within the bounds of the most conservative estimate to say that there are more than one thousand years of pastoral leadership lost to the churches of congregational type of government annually, and that more than one thousand years of service are lost to the ministers every year through causes which are not beyond reasonable control, in part at least.

But it is not alone a matter of lost time and service which is involved. More serious than that is the fact that short pastorates and the constant restlessness on the part of both pastors and churches, which is everywhere an outstanding phenomenon to-day, give evidence that a very large number of pastoral settlements have not been wisely made. There would seem to be little doubt that many of these unhappy ecclesiastical marriages are due to causes which are subject to influence at the hands of committees and candidates.

Add to this the unfortunate divisions, factionalism, misunderstandings, and consequent spiritual weakness, which too frequently result from bungling work, and the total is very great.

To reduce this appalling loss as much as possible is a plain duty.

Purpose of the Book

This book makes no attempt to revolutionize a system. Its purpose is to reduce, if possible, some of the friction and loss incident to present methods,

and to present such practical suggestions as will be of service to pulpit committees and candidates in their relations together. It is based upon the proposition that the situation presents difficulties to committees and ministers alike, and that both parties are desirous of doing the wise and right thing in all their dealings.

What is presented here is not the result of one man's experience nor the expression of an individual opinion. It represents the judgment of a large number of men of very wide experience from the Atlantic to the Pacific—secretaries, pastors, laymen, and general representatives—whose cooperation has been sought and gladly given, and to whom the author gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness.

While this monograph, therefore, is in no sense official, it can be said that it represents, quite as fully as any official document could, the consensus of the best thought on the subject to-day.

We trust that it will be evident to all that the object of the book is not caustic criticism, but a constructive presentation of an important phase of church life, written with sympathetic appreciation of the problem from the point of view of the committee as well as of the minister.

II

THE PULPIT COMMITTEE

The Appointment of the Committee

UNDER normal conditions the pulpit committee should be appointed as soon as the resignation of the pastor is accepted. This is not in accordance with custom, but it is in the interest of improvement.

What business house, accepting the resignation of its general manager a month ahead of his actual departure, would wait until he had left town before even looking about for a successor? Would it be in the interests of efficiency if this nation should wait until the term of office of the President had expired and the White House had been vacated before appointing a committee to canvass the field for a new President? To ask such questions is to answer them.

Why do we wait then until the close of a pastorate before appointing a pulpit committee to search for a successor? Probably simply because we have been in the habit of doing so.

The custom may have arisen from the fact that, in the beginning, pastorates were much longer in duration, and the loss of time between them did

not figure so largely as to-day. Then, it has been fostered by the fact that so much emphasis has been laid on "trial sermons," and it is not as convenient for candidates to occupy a pulpit while the retiring pastor is still on the field. Also churches have not been in the mood to consider a new pastor while parting with their old pastor, provided they are loath to lose him—as is usually the case. Moreover, it has been thought by many that it was not courteous to the retiring pastor to consider his successor while he was still "in their midst." It must also be admitted that there has been a suspicion on the part of the churches that departing pastors would want too much voice in the choice of their successors.

But, even admitting all these objections, it is still true that, in most cases, not more than a month or six weeks elapse between the resignation of a pastor and the actual close of his pastorate. Indeed, it is generally wise, when a severance of relationships has been decided upon, that the period of closing the pastorate should not be prolonged.

Now there is no reason why a committee should not be getting matters in hand during the month or six weeks. Much preliminary work could be done. Usually the committee would not be prepared to bring a possible pastor into the pulpit before the retiring pastor had left. As a matter of fact, retiring pastors could help committees much more than is realized. The bogey of interference

and dictation of successors is largely a man of straw, considering the independent spirit of the ordinary pulpit committee.

The immediate appointment of a pulpit committee, therefore, is a step toward the elimination of waste and loss.

The Personnel of the Committee

How shall the pulpit committee be composed? Formerly it was made up of the "brethren" almost exclusively. It is getting to be exceptional now that a woman is not a member. Considering the large share which the women have in the work of the church, there is every reason why women should be members of committees. Woman's intuition and general point of view are of value to the committee.

The question is sometimes raised whether a non-church-member should be on the committee. Usually not, though there are some rare exceptions to this rule. Where the incorporation consists of both "church and society," as in many parts of the country, a representative of the society, even though he be not a member of the church, may properly be a member of the pulpit committee. In other cases, the services of a specially judicious man who is a constant participant in the work of the church, though for some reason not a member, may be valuable. But no non-church-member should be on the committee merely because

he contributes largely to the salary, nor should he be the dominating personality of the committee.

The Size of the Committee

The pulpit committee should be *representative of the whole church*. That is, it should have in its membership those who represent and understand the different types of thought, the various ages, and natural divisions and temperaments in the congregation. Without separating people into classes, it is true that in most churches there are several distinct types of spiritual life and various points of view with reference to the practical work of the church. It is in the interest of harmony in extending a call and of heartiness in welcoming a pastor that these general types be recognized.

It is well to have one or two of the younger members—that is, in point of church-membership—on the committee, that they may gain experience which will be valuable in the future.

Some churches make the pulpit committee a standing committee of the church. On the whole, we doubt the wisdom of this plan, unless the church expects or desires an annual change of pastors. A standing committee should have some function to perform at least annually. The best selections for such a committee as this will ordinarily be made when there is a definite task to perform.

In some churches the deacons automatically become the pulpit committee. As a *pulpit supply*

committee, this may be a good arrangement; but for the work of selecting a man to present to the church for a call the same set of men should hardly be commissioned every time. A board of deacons is likely to become too set and conservative, and does not usually represent, or even understand, all classes of thought and interest in the church. By adding two or three men to the board of deacons to form the committee the objection to turning the matter over to the same men every time is met.

Usually the pulpit committee is elected to serve until a pastor is called, each time a vacancy occurs. Election is ordinarily by acclamation. Probably five is the number most often selected; but local conditions determine whether the number shall be three or five or seven. Sometimes nine members are elected; but such a committee is rather unwieldy.

A General Committee

A plan which finds much favor with larger churches and has a great deal to commend it is that of electing a general committee of from fifteen to fifty members, according to the size of the church. From its membership this large committee appoints subcommittees, one on *pulpit supply* and one on *pastoral search*.

As is indicated by the name, the Pulpit Supply Committee keeps the pulpit supplied with preachers from Sunday to Sunday, *but not with candidates*. Indeed, this subcommittee is charged not to engage

any man who is available for pastor, *unless specially requested to do so* by the Pastoral Search Committee. These two subcommittees must work in harmony, or the supply committee may easily embarrass the search committee in its work.

The duty of the Pastoral Search Committee is to take such steps as it thinks expedient to get into touch with a prospective pastor. Members of this committee usually visit the church of a possible candidate, and learn all they can about him and his work from personal observation and inquiry. Sometimes they request the Pulpit Supply Committee to arrange to have him supply the pulpit for a Sunday or two. This search committee does the work usually falling to the regular pulpit committee, with the exception of supplying the pulpit with preachers from Sunday to Sunday, and should be composed of the wisest and most representative men on the committee.

When this Pastoral Search Committee has finally agreed upon the man it believes should be called to the church, it brings his name before the general committee, to whom it presents the results of its search and its recommendations.

The general committee now goes over the situation very carefully and much more thoroughly than could be done in a regular business meeting of the whole church. If the general committee is persuaded that the proposed name should be submitted to the church and unites in recommending it, there

is almost no possibility that its recommendation will not be accepted by the church. A committee as large as this is practically certain to represent every group and every type of thought in the church. If, on the other hand, a general committee is not unanimous in its sentiment toward a candidate, it would be folly to submit that candidate's name to the church as a whole.

One advantage of this plan is that if a man's name is not favorably acted on by the general committee, it does not become a formal or public matter, and both church and candidate are spared embarrassment.

A general remark should be made regarding the work of the Pastoral Search Committee. If two or more pastors are visited by this committee before one man is determined upon as a candidate and negotiations entered into, it is well to have some of the same members visit both men. For example, A, B, and C hear Mr. Smith on February first. D, E, and F should not hear Mr. Jones the same day, and then meet with A, B, and C, and try to decide which of the two shall be considered further. B, C, and D, or C, D, and E should hear Mr. Jones on a later date. There can be no fair comparison unless some of those reporting have heard both men.

There seems to be no good reason why this plan of a general committee should not be adopted by smaller churches with profit.

The Organization of the Committee

The first thing for the committee to do is to elect a chairman (unless the church has designated the chairman) and a secretary, or clerk.

The Chairman. Whether the chairman is designated by the church or the committee, care should be exercised to see that the man chosen will worthily represent the church and has the qualifications which equip him for the difficult and often delicate work of a pulpit committee. Bungling or unfair work by the committee may result in friction and long-continued trouble in the church.

A man who is void of judicial temperament, narrow-minded, or hypersensitive, crude or discourteous in manner, or who has not the faculty of working with others, or is not considerate of the opinions or rights of others, or who is bent on having his own way, is lacking in some of the prime characteristics of a good chairman. A chairman should be all that we understand in the best sense by the term Christian gentleman. Chairmen have sometimes been unnecessarily and unfortunately gruff, unsympathetic, thoughtless, unfair, and even discourteous toward candidates, and not open to suggestions from members of the church or committee.

The chairman should remember that he is not the whole committee, and should not assume too much responsibility, nor decide important matters him-

self. Much unpleasantness has arisen because when a candidate has visited a field, all his relations have been with the chairman alone. Had he met the committee as a whole or the different members separately and talked over matters with them, things would have been better understood. A chairman who has a special candidate whom he favors may, by dealing alone with a visiting brother, handle the situation to his own satisfaction, but not for the best interests of the church.

Chairmen who are employers or foremen in the habit of hiring day-labor should be careful not to carry over the attitude of "hiring" men into their relations with a minister.

A concrete example will illustrate some of the points we are making.

A city church of nearly a thousand members had as a chairman a brother of excellent character and devotion to his task, who allowed a minister of standing to visit the church on invitation of the committee for two Sundays and the intervening week, and did not himself call, or see that any member of his committee called, on the visitor; did not show him any courtesy or attention whatever; absented himself with three or four other members of the committee the first Sunday—probably to hear another minister who was a possible candidate; had no meeting with the candidate or any talk as to the situation until after the second Sunday evening, when he asked the visitor to call

at the store where he was employed and "talk over matters." More sins of omission in handling the work of a committee it would be hard to find; yet the man was a godly man, and had no idea he was unfair to the candidate.

An analysis of this particular case will serve to point out several things to be kept in mind in the relations between candidate and committee.

In the first place, all the members of the committee should have been present the first Sunday, except as prevented by sickness or unavoidable causes. Their absence was an advertisement to the church that they were not warmly interested in the candidate. If a committee which has the opportunity to look up a man and know about him before he comes does not stand by him with ordinary courtesy, how can the church be expected to warm up to him? Committees should remember that they are not only to discover and interpret the sentiment of the church with respect to a man, but they are to make sentiment, not by "campaigning," but by an attitude of interest and confidence in him. Churches should be led to have an expectant attitude toward a man, and it should be known that the committee, while not championing the candidacy of the man in any partizan spirit, believes he is worthy, and that if there is mutual attraction they can safely call him as pastor. Otherwise, they leave too much to the uncertain impression made by the pulpit work.

In the second place, no meeting of the committee was held when the candidate could talk over the situation with the members. All his dealings were with the chairman, who may have been personally interested in another man.

Again, by their aloofness and failure to show interest in him simply as a man, not calling upon him nor arranging for him to meet any of the members personally, they showed that they were not interested in him, and that the only chance he had was in making such a tremendous impression by his pulpit work that the opposition of the committee would be overruled by the demand of the people.

In the fourth place, the chairman, if there was any talking over to be done, should have called on the candidate where they could have gone over matters in quietness and privacy, not in the publicity and amid the distractions of a place of business.

Last, but not least, it was inexcusable for a committee to spend part of the time a visiting candidate was with them in listening to another man.

The Secretary. Frequently the chairman does most of the correspondence; but it is well for the committee to have a secretary, if for no other reason than because it is in the interest of the division of labor. He should not only keep a record of the meetings of the committee, but he should have charge of the correspondence. He should acknowl-

edge promptly and courteously all letters recommending men or asking consideration. No pulpit committee should complain of the number of letters received. Acknowledgments need not be lengthy; but common courtesy demands replies. As long as our present system continues these letters must be written to pulpit committees, and are not to be resented. (Return postage should be enclosed by candidates, however.)

III

THE COMMITTEE AT WORK

The Spiritual Note

AT the risk of seeming to imply a lack of spirituality on the part of committees, it is worth while to speak in emphasis of the spiritual aspect of their work.

They are charged with responsibility in a critical period of the church's life. On their action, be it wise or unwise, depend many sacred interests. Scarcely anything which a church does as a body is more pregnant with possibilities of good and evil than the choice of a pastor. How natural, then, that the committee should solemnly inquire, "Who is sufficient for these things?" and that it should take the attitude of humble dependence on divine guidance! That this heavenly direction shall be mediated through human judgments does not change its reality one whit, but gives force to the considerations which urge reliance on the Great Head of the Church.

Many men who have been members of pulpit committees will testify that too much of the work has been done without any clear recognition of its essentially spiritual character.

It would be well if the committee should spend an evening or two in prayer and in raising and answering such questions as the following: What is the church and what is its mission? What is the task of the pastor of a church? What kind of pastor do we need? Are we ready to call such a pastor? Are we ready to do our part in support of a pastor?

To put the prayer-meetings of the church in the charge of the pulpit committee for a month is often a good plan, and is calculated to link the church and the committee together in interest and prayer. Such questions as are suggested above could be profitably discussed, and would be useful in preparing the church to take a rational and cooperative attitude toward the new pastor.

The Policy to be Adopted

When the committee has organized, it should, first of all, determine upon the policy to be pursued. Committees are usually uninstructed by the church on this point, and are free to exercise their judgment as to which of several plans of action shall be adopted. When the plan has been adopted, the church should be informed of it, so that there may be no impatience at delays, which often seem unjustified when the church at large is ignorant of the policy of the committee.

The Stated Supply and Acting Pastor. A plan which finds increasing favor with churches, both

large and small, wherever practicable, is the engagement of some minister (not necessarily, though preferably, of the same denomination) to serve the church, either as stated supply or acting pastor. In some cases the one secured is a retired pastor, in others a minister who does not wish to settle with a church.

A stated supply merely preaches on Sundays, regularly, except as the church may wish to hear a candidate. If he lives on the field, he also conducts the prayer-meetings, as a rule. An acting pastor performs most of the functions of a regular pastor, though for but a limited period.

The advantages of this plan are evident. It provides the continuous influence and leadership of one personality. It largely saves the church from disorganization as far as its work is concerned. It sometimes prevents the development of friction and the formation of cliques. It gives the pulpit committee *an opportunity to do its work with deliberation and thoroughness*. It enables the supply to do constructive, and even aggressive, work in the interim.

Various Supplies. Another valuable plan is that of engaging various *supplies who are not available as candidates for the pulpit*, while the committee is looking up an available man.

While this does not provide a continuous leadership and misses some of the advantages of the

stated-supply plan, it does something toward preventing confusion and loss of spiritual uplift due to the appearance in the pulpit every Sunday of men who are possible pastors. To ask people to come to church Sunday after Sunday for two or three months to listen to a possible candidate each time tends to develop a critical spirit, which is an effective barrier to spiritual gain and makes the final choice of a pastor more difficult.

Candidating. Volumes might be written on the practice of candidating and a whole library on the interesting experiences of candidates. Almost universally detested and dreaded by both churches and pastors, the practice still prevails, shorn of but little, if any, of its "ancient glories." Men of wide experience and spiritual insight declare emphatically (and often feelingly) that they doubt if the system has any strong points, and that they do not believe it is of the Lord. Others, equally devoted and experienced, say that "with all its faults they love it still," and that no other way would accord with congregational polity. A third group says that, "as long as we are what we are, candidating is the only way to secure a pastor."

Such a common practice can hardly be an un-mixed evil, whatever be its weaknesses. There are points of strength and value in it. Let us notice some of these without attempting to arrange them in any order of importance.

It is democratic. It gives the whole membership of the church a voice in the choice of the pastor, and (theoretically) enlists all in the support of the man who receives a unanimous call. Every man has the chance to "speak, or else forever hereafter hold his peace." Critics of the practice call attention to the fact that while the theory is perfect, democracy is no proof against manipulation by "rings and machines," as the history of too many situations attests.

It frequently reveals temperamental or other characteristics which either conspicuously fit or as plainly unfit a man for the pulpit visited.

It gives the candidate the chance to meet the "key men" of the church and to determine in his mind whether he could realize an effective ministry as their leader.

The candidate may get some fair estimate of the caliber of the church. Nearly every church has a "field." Not every church is itself a "force."

It puts a man to the test of special circumstances.

It gives the church a chance to judge whether the candidate is likely to meet its needs, especially in case there are unusual problems in the situation. It may be remarked, however, that a committee dealing with a man privately is more likely to have an intelligent judgment on this point than a whole congregation.

The spirit of both church and candidate may be mutually revealed through personal contact. A

man who is easily discouraged or has not the "kindling" qualities essential to arouse cooperation and enthusiasm should not be called to a church already discouraged and facing difficulties which will require patience and faith.

It provides opportunity for mutual acquaintance, and both parties have an *experimental test*. For example, a candidate declined to accept a call because the response to a slight request which he made for cooperation on the occasion of his visit to the church, was of such a nature that he was convinced that the church would not follow his leadership heartily enough to assure success.

Some churches feel that they will "find the man in his message," that the Lord will reveal to them his leading through the message of the day. If a church is a prayerful, spiritually minded body, this may be all right. Otherwise, it is pretty hazardous. Some preachers know the kind of candidating sermons that "take best" and wisely use them. Many better men do not have as good judgment on this matter—from lack of experience, it may be—and select more meaty, but less striking sermons from the popular point of view.

In spite of the strong points of the candidating system, however, there is general agreement that "a little of it goes a long way," and that anything which will mitigate its terrors to the candidates and relieve some of its horrors to the churches, will be welcomed by both.

Every one knows that the system creates an unnatural situation, and that it encourages hypocrisy and unreality in both churches and candidates. The chances are against a man being natural. Some men rise to heights which they cannot maintain, either as to preaching or as to general impressions of personality; others are decidedly below par. Many of the best pastors and preachers are failures as candidates. "Some men strike twelve the first time, and continue to run down on the field," writes a secretary of wide experience.

Too much depends on temporary conditions, such as weather, health of candidate, local circumstances, and so forth.

Minor and superficial qualities are often given more weight than major and fundamental ones. An unfamiliar tone of voice may have more influence than the spiritual tone of the sermon.

Too much importance is attached to mere preaching.

"It is inadequate, unfair, unfortunate," writes one. "It is embarrassing to the candidate, and of little value to the churches," says another. "It breeds jealousies, factions, and alienations," says a third. "Prejudice, emotion, and doubt dictate to both sides, instead of reason," charges another.

It brings friends into competition and encourages groups in churches to work for favorites.

A danger attending the candidating practice is that, when a good man comes, the church will hold

its decision in abeyance until other candidates have been heard, and finally, tired by their various experiences, will take the last man who appears, whether he is good, bad, or indifferent.

A good candidate is a good psychologist, though he may be a poor preacher and a worse pastor; a poor candidate is a poor psychologist, though he may be a good preacher and a better pastor.

The candidating system is based upon the theory that a mixed congregation—that is, a congregation made up of people of all ages and varieties of thought, of all degrees of education, and of wide differences of temperament—is competent to pass intelligently on the qualifications of a stranger to become preacher, pastor, leader, and shepherd of their spiritual interests. It is about parallel to the submission of the choice of a superintendent of schools to an ordinary moving-picture audience after several candidates had made addresses of a type calculated to arouse popular interest. It is entirely possible for such an audience to choose the right man. You never can tell, for good choices are sometimes made by accident. But it would be a dangerous proceeding from an educational standpoint. Few communities would entrust the intellectual interests of their young, and few educators would entrust their own professional fortunes, to the workings of such a system. In selecting men who shall direct and watch over the intellectual life of our children, we do not hesitate

to accept the judgment of our representatives, the school commissioners, whose recommendation is based upon a balancing of qualifications of the candidates and not upon the ephemeral impressions of oratory or personal magnetism. Yet when the concern is with the highest, spiritual interests of young and old, we too often insist on mass judgment which is preceded by no adequate investigation or consideration, or which overrules the recommendation of wise representatives.

Pastors do not object to being judged by a competent jury; but very few, if any, congregations have the judicial frame of mind in considering a candidate. In spite of every endeavor to be fair, people are inevitably swayed by their likes and dislikes, and their attitude toward a candidate is often, if not usually, dictated by emotion more largely than by reason. Many men with long and honorable records in the pastorate, possessed of the qualities that make for the highest usefulness, tried and true in all their work, have been rejected because they did not just "make a hit" with the congregation on a particular Sunday. It is a humiliation to a fine-grained man, whose character, ability, and experience qualify him for a vacant pulpit, to be talked over and "turned down" by silly girls or "aciduous" sisters, who cannot recognize ability and piety unless they wear a certain label, or by some cranky, small-caliber brother who bases all his judgments upon whether the preacher

votes the Prohibition ticket or is a member of a secret order; and, in many cases, it really injures him professionally.

Rather convincing proof that congregational judgment is not infallible is furnished by the fact that Methodist churches keep their pastors longer and are apparently better satisfied than those of some more democratic denominations. In nine cases out of ten a church could safely risk calling a man who had proved his worth by a work which stood searching investigation, especially if he had had a long pastorate. No Presbyterian church in the land would hesitate to call Doctor Jowett to its pulpit if he could be induced to accept, even though no member had heard him preach. Just as reliable and adequate information can be secured concerning almost any preacher by a committee which will take the pains to do so. And if the church is willing to act on the same basis as a business firm would act in electing a new manager, it can reach a conclusion just as well warranted.

Many practical illustrations and proofs of this position are at hand. Large churches, as well as small ones, on the Pacific Coast, because of the great expense of having candidates visit them from the East, frequently call pastors "unseen and unheard." Many of the pastors of the largest and most important churches on the Coast to-day were called as a result, not of personal visits and candidating, but of judgments formed by committees

and acted on by churches after careful investigation by correspondence and otherwise. In fact, inability to hear a man and "look him over" forces a committee to be more careful and thorough in finding out his elements of strength and weakness and in looking up his record for effective ministry. The chances are that a church *will actually know more about a man they do not see than one they have seen as a candidate*; for, in the latter case, general impressions are likely to overbalance and even to smother reason.

It is not to be understood that the preceding discussion advocates the election of pastors by pulpit committees, nor even that the church should not hear the candidate before voting. (That is another matter.) The church should extend the call. But the church should base its action primarily upon the recommendation of the committee, and should act in view of the facts gathered by it.

As a practical step toward better conditions, it would be well if committees would invite candidates to visit churches only after investigation which satisfies them that, as far as they can judge, the candidate would make a suitable pastor.

Wide inquiry indicates that the practice of calling pastors without candidating is increasing slightly.

The effect of the candidating system upon the ministry itself is not to be overlooked. There are certain injuries to the spirit of ministers which cannot be lightly regarded. It is a significant thing that

there seems to be little testimony as to spiritual enrichment for which candidating experiences *per se* are responsible. While every minister has had delightful fellowships and happy experiences on some candidating visits, they have been largely experiences for which the visit simply furnished the occasion, and were not the outcome of the essential principles involved in candidating.

If all the cynicism which has been begotten in the ministry as a result of unfortunate relationships with pulpit committees in connection with candidating could be cast into the depth of the sea, the quality of the brine might not be improved, but the feelings of the ministry would be purged of no little bitterness.

Candidating puts a premium on the display of superficiality in the ministry. Ministers come back from candidating trips wondering whether they have played the hypocrite or the fool, or both. If they have been hard pressed by circumstances or the place has seemed unusually attractive, the temptation has been pretty strong to do a little political work—ecclesiastical politics, of course—and to pull every wire to “land the place.” All this has been repulsive to men whose lives have been foreign to such things.

Then again, no man who is not altogether “clanging brass or a tinkling cymbal” can experience a succession of failures in candidating without having his self-confidence greatly weakened. This is

a distinct loss in most cases. It is also true that a man's professional chances are not helped, whether they are hindered in a particular case or not, by unsuccessful candidacies.

Brethren whose friendship has covered many years have sometimes found themselves in competition for a pulpit without purpose on their part, and circumstances have developed in connection with the competitions which have bred suspicion of unfair methods and may often have been responsible for hard feelings and interrupted fraternal relationships.

These things hurt men's spirits. Ministers do not ask to be exempt from tests which fairly determine their worth; but until candidating is put on a basis where they can feel that there is reasonable guaranty that the best man will stand as good a chance as the poorest, they will continue to resent the whole system. And the church cannot afford to ignore a source of so much irritation and unhappiness and positive spiritual injury to her leaders.

A Middle-of-the-Road Course. It must, after all, be admitted that it is a source of much satisfaction if a church can feel that the personality of its future leader is likely to be agreeable. Is there any way to provide for this possibility and still avoid a long season of candidating? Some churches think they have found one.

A church calls Mr. A to become pastor after such investigation assures it of his fitness. Then Mr. A spends two weeks or a month on the field. If he finds that he and the church are not mutually attracted, he can decline the call with propriety. If he is the kind of man the committee should have discovered him to be, and if he is not being forced out of his present church—which fact the committee can also ascertain—he will not wish to accept the call unless he finds a satisfactory response between the people and himself.

The disadvantage of this plan is that a church objects to being “turned down,” just as a candidate does. But if the man is given as full an understanding of the conditions as possible before the call is extended, he can give a prophecy of his answer, which, though not binding, will in most cases be fulfilled.

Pseudo-candidating. There is a kind of candidating which goes by other names. It is a kind of ecclesiastical hypocrisy, and is the favorite trick of committees who want to be under obligations to no man, but who wish all the advantages of a candidacy in connection with every man. Committees arrange for a man to supply the pulpit, but insist that he is “only a supply,” though his only reason for interest in the situation is with respect to the pastorate. That puts the committee under no obligation to him, but he is invariably *regarded as a*

candidate by church and committee, and is estimated, criticized, and treated as a candidate. This is too one-sided a proposition to commend itself to thinking committees. It usually means just this, that the committee has not taken the trouble to learn much about the man, but will give him the chance to come and create such an impression by his pulpit work and personal magnetism that the congregation will demand that he be considered a candidate; or it means that, after a half-dozen men have appeared in this way before the church as "supplies," the church will be asked by the committee to vote on them all in one meeting, whether with the consent of the ministers involved or without it.

Getting in Touch with Candidates

Candidates Named by Letter. A committee, in taking up its work, will usually have, say, a score of letters concerning possible pastors. In some way that need not be discussed the committee will be impressed by some of these letters and depressed by others. Out of them they will almost instinctively select ten or a dozen for further consideration.

We believe it would be a wise plan for each member of the committee to read the various letters received by the committee, instead of having the chairman read them all aloud. It would take longer undoubtedly, but the time involved would not be

large, and it would be fairer to the candidate, as some letters make one impression on one man and a different one on his neighbor when read by them individually.

The Church Taking the Initiative. What course shall a pulpit committee pursue when no names have been suggested for consideration? How shall it get into touch with possible candidates? While it is true that most committees have a long list of names to select from when they begin their work—one Philadelphia church had one hundred and fifty-seven—there are churches located in other places which do not always have such a profusion of possibilities at hand and are compelled to take the initiative themselves. Usually a committee desires to supplement the list it already has, however large that list is.

Some denominations have either State or national bureaus or organizations of some sort as mediums of connection between churches and pastors. Correspondence with the secretary of such an agency will always secure sympathetic attention, and valuable assistance will be rendered. Probably the best known of these helpful agencies is the Massachusetts Congregational Bureau. Application, either in person or by correspondence, with any of the following is a sure way to get into touch with worthy available men, as they are in constant touch with the pastors and have means of knowing the “mov-

ables " as well as the successful among the brethren ; secretaries of State organizations, general denominational workers, moderators of Associations, leading pastors of the section, and editors of denominational papers.

Advertisements in the denominational papers seem to result in bringing in a list of undesirables as well as the few desirable, and the testimony as to the value of this plan is not encouraging.

An important thing for committees to remember is the claim for consideration which men in smaller fields have in connection with larger opportunities. Excellent young men have been "stranded" for long periods, if not permanently, in small country or city churches, because committees insist on labeling a man according to the size of the church he is with, forgetting that "he who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much." So common is this attitude of committees that older men in the ministry frankly advise young men not to go to small churches, lest they find it impossible to move to larger ones for which their abilities and experience will fit them. The feeling that they are not getting a square deal in such matters is one of the most serious disturbing elements in the life of the ministry to-day. If faithful and efficient work is to have less recognition as an asset in religious circles than in business affairs, many good pastors will continue to labor under constant discouragement.

Do not invite or allow in the pulpit for a single service *while the church is pastorless* a man who is unknown and who brings no sufficient credentials. (And such credentials should be of reasonably recent date.)

Pulpit committees must protect the churches and must not be "easy" in this regard. Clerical rascals, of whom there are happily but a few relatively, know the language of Zion thoroughly and are familiar with the superficial "tricks of the trade" by which men ingratiate themselves with a congregation and "lead captive silly women" of both sexes, whose demand that a call be extended will not be denied. And when once a church becomes infatuated with a candidate, it is next to impossible to protect that church against its own folly. Information, warning, and entreaty are alike ineffectual. Perhaps as many churches have suffered incalculable harm as a result of infatuation for an unworthy man, as have been brought to distress through ignorance of facts.

Sizing up Candidates

How shall a candidate be looked up as to record and probable adaptability to a field?

From Letters of Recommendation. First, there are the letters of commendation received by the committee. These should be given weight, but not too much weight. It must be remembered that in the majority of cases the letters are written at

the request of the man commended. Most pastors are glad to do a fraternal act—they may need it themselves some time—and they are generally willing to suggest a brother pastor's name anywhere he requests, provided they know nothing which disqualifies him, morally or otherwise. They may know nothing of the field to which they send the name, and they rightfully assume that it is fair to put that part of the responsibility onto the committee.

But it is not conclusive to say, "Mr. A is recommended by Dr. So-and-So, and, therefore, he must be all right." He may be all right as to character, but he might be a "bull in a china-shop" in the church considering him. The letter of commendation should give him sympathetic consideration, but not final judgment. The committee should carry on an investigation of its own by correspondence and personal visits where practicable.

Investigation by Correspondence and Visits. Considerable helpful information can be gathered from correspondence with State officials and general denominational workers and personal friends. But correspondence information is likely to be very partial, and nothing can take the place of personal visits to the field of the candidate and personal contact with him and the conditions of his work. Few men will say anything on paper to the detriment of the prospects of a brother. It is well that

this is so. Yet qualifying sentences in writing often convey meanings far different from the same sentiment spoken in conversation. Probably the little "but" has spoiled more chances for men than pages of direct charges against them. After a long eulogy a significant "but" makes its appearance, and "finis" is written to the chapter as far as the prospects of that man are concerned.

When committees visit the field of a candidate, however, they need to be very careful. They may happen to appear on a Sunday when, for some reason that is not on the surface, conditions are far from normal. If the congregations happen to be small or the pastor is below par that day, the committee's estimate is likely to be a wrong one. It might happen that the congregations were unusually large for the day, due to the absence of the pastor of another church. The committee should be particular to get at the general facts of the pastorate, and not merely the isolated ones they happen to see.

It sometimes happens that a splendid pastor is a misfit in a particular field, or that he has had to encounter the hostility of certain elements in the town or city, and his pastorate does not present to a visiting committee a very rosy appearance. Care should be exercised to see that a man is not wrongly judged by limiting the estimate of his work to one pastorate. Say a man is fifty years of age and has had four pastorates of prosperity,

but his present field has had the retarding pull of conservatism to such an extent that with his temperament he has been unable to handle the situation. Shall he be judged a failure? By no means; he may be just the type of man for the church considering him, as his work taken as a whole will show.

Inquiry should be made outside as well as inside the church. A wise committee will find a way to get in conversation with storekeepers, boys and girls, and people about town, and find out what sort of standing the man has. If the boys and girls say he is all right, he is worth considering. If the hotel men say he is a hard fighter against liquor, but a fair one, he is a good man to keep in mind.

In getting information concerning a man a committee needs to estimate the source of the information also. One man's enmity may be the best commendation a man can have, another man's approval the worst.

Confidential Information. A delicate point in connection with investigation of a candidate's record is that relating to "confidential information."

How shall this information be regarded? This much may be said: The committee should do justice to the candidate. If some brother says that the candidate, while at a former church, had "trouble with a woman," the committee (if there is any serious thought of calling the man) should remem-

ber that he is in no position to defend himself and should, as a committee, find out the facts in the case before "passing him up." It is easy enough to say that there are plenty of names under consideration concerning which there is no suggestion of this character, and so the committee need not bother to ascertain the truth of this charge. But this is not fair to the candidate, for he will face the same situation with another committee, and he is entitled to a square deal. Good men may easily become victims of charges of "woman trouble," "owed everybody," and so forth, simply because other good men, brother pastors, accept without substantiating such rumors and pass them on to do their poisonous work. Every untrue or dishonest minister should be denied the opportunity of moral leadership; but this is not a denial to be lightly made. Excellent men, because of activity against the liquor business or the disciplining of some unworthy brother, have been made the objects of slander. We should play fair in these matters. While the author has not had personal experience along this line, he has had wide opportunities of observation, and was told by responsible authority that after he had preached a temperance sermon with a particular application, a few years ago, certain brewing interests offered to stand behind the saloon-keepers concerned if they would make a campaign against his reputation.

The fortunes of the preacher are in a special sense in the keeping of his brethren, and as we value our

own standing we should handle tenderly the reputation of others.

The Pastor's Wife. How far is inquiry pertinent as to the pastor's wife?

This is a somewhat delicate part of the committee's task. The candidate should not be embarrassed by direct questioning. If other information is needed than can be gained from casual conversation with him, the committee should secure it from brother pastors or friends in the candidate's church.

It is entirely proper for the committee to learn whether the candidate's wife is in sympathy with his work and by her general attitude is helpful to him, and whether she has any unfortunate personal characteristics which have hindered his work in other fields. In a sense, no man can be a better pastor than his wife will let him be, and churches have an unquestionable right to know if there are home conditions which preclude the probability of a successful pastorate. She is a force to be reckoned with, socially, personally, and religiously. If the candidate's wife is an invalid, he should inform the committee, as a matter of honesty, since such a fact has an important bearing on his work.

The Value of Statistics. How far should statistics count in estimating the ability of a candidate? Perhaps the most succinct and comprehensive an-

swer to this question would be, "Only as far as they are interpreted in view of all the conditions on the field where a man has labored." Religious statistics should be weighed, not counted. From a numerical standpoint they may be absolutely useless or positively misleading. Sometimes ten additions may mean more than a hundred, and a net loss of a score be of more significance than a net gain of an equal number.

Doctrinal Position of Candidate. How far shall committees concern themselves with the doctrinal positions of candidates?

As might be expected, opinions differ on this point. But there is general agreement that, without acting as a council of inquisition, the committee should ascertain that a candidate (1) preaches an evangelical, positive, and constructive message, (2) is in general accord with his denomination, and (3) is well balanced in his emphasis of truth.

Here is an appropriate place to remark that the committee should make sure that the candidate's ideal, so far as his teaching is concerned, is *not simply to announce truth, but to persuade men to holy living and to the acceptance of the truth as it is in Jesus.*

Attitude Toward Candidates

Shall Ministers Make Application? Shall ministers desiring consideration make application on

their own behalf either by letter or by word they personally speak?

This question may be answered by pointing out the attitude of pulpit committees in general and by discussing the merits of the question.

First, it is generally true that committees give scant consideration to a man who writes in his own interest. He is discounted in the eyes of the committee, and it is assumed that he is not the man the church wants.

Is this a fair conclusion? *By no means.* In every other department of life it is considered proper to be frank and aboveboard and to make application for a position if it is desired. A Christian has no more right to be postmaster unless the Lord is leading him than a minister has to be pastor of a certain church. But we recognize the propriety of a man offering to serve the public as postmaster.

The author has been surprised and gratified to find his own opinion confirmed almost unanimously by those who have expressed themselves on this point, namely, that the attitude of committees should change in this regard. It might be asserted that the feeling amounts to a demand on the part of many consecrated and able executives as well as pastors that the matter be faced squarely, a public sentiment on the part of the churches be unified and voiced, and a reasonable Christian attitude be taken. One eminent authority, in reply to the ques-

tion, "How should a committee regard a letter from a minister asking that he be considered in connection with a vacancy?" writes: "As making an inherently proper request, as being essentially on a par with one from a church to a pastor asking if he would consider a call. If pastors obtrude themselves on churches above their grade, so too, *per contra*, churches do a like thing."

The attitude of committees on this matter is traditional and is apparently based on the theory that *whenever the Lord leads a pastor and people together, he leads without the pastor knowing anything about it*. The pastor is supposed to be surprised, like the maiden to whom the swain "pops the question." And he usually is surprised—about as much. Probably it is a fact that nine-tenths of the calls to pastorates (some say ninety-five per cent) and ninety per cent of the letters received by committees are the result of solicitation initiated and effected in some roundabout way by the person called or commended. Comparatively few men are recommended, and less are called, without their own suggestion and effort. Most pastors, and others, are too busy and too much occupied with their own affairs to be on the lookout for other people; and, as a rule, they write in a man's behalf only at his request, either direct or through a third party.

It seems to be a fiction we like to perpetuate, though it must be at the cost of moral integrity,

that the really worthy minister is always sought after and never seeks a change. It may be a much more Christian thing for a pastor to seek a change sometimes than for him to continue where he is, as long as his seeking is honorably done.

Why should it be true that "the Lord is leading" when Mr. Smith asks his friend, Mr. Jones, to recommend him to the Calvary Church pulpit, to which he is finally called; and that the Lord is not leading when he frankly asks the Calvary committee to consider his name? The chief difference is that, in the first case, both pastor and friend have run the risk of assuming (and they frequently do assume) a hypocritical attitude. If Mr. Jones let it be known, or even supposed, that Mr. Smith had the least suspicion of his writing, to say nothing of having requested it, his recommendation would fall flat. Neither one tells a falsehood; but Jones so formulates his letter that no thought will be entertained that Smith is interested or informed at all. The success of the whole proceeding depends upon a false supposition planted or nurtured in the minds of the committee.

The author was recently in touch with a pulpit committee which had no use for the name of a certain pastor, because they happened to know that he had asked a brother pastor to commend him to them. At the same time the author was asked to suggest a name, which he did. The irony of the situation lay in the fact that the brother whose name

he suggested and who was afterward called to the pastorate had asked him to make the suggestion, exactly as the first man had made *his* request through his friend. Inasmuch as the request for suggestion came from the committee, no deceit was practised, and there was no obligation to reveal the reason for the suggestion.

When a pastor has sufficient grounds for believing that his work is done at a certain church or there exist other adequate reasons for changing pastorates, he is perfectly justified in asking directly or through a friend for consideration by a committee. For it should be borne in mind that *he does not apply for the position; he simply solicits consideration.* That means that he asks the committee to make it possible for candidate and committee, through frank and open correspondence and personal interviews, *to determine whether in their judgment the Lord is leading them together.* Either one may decide, on further investigation, that they should not enter upon pastoral relationships. That is perfectly proper, and the minister is just as likely to be the one so to decide as is the committee.

It is probably too early as yet to advise that ministers write in their own behalf altogether, although we believe the practice is increasing and that committees here and there are recognizing its legitimacy; and the more it is done, the more quickly will its honorable character be admitted. But one

man cannot afford to kick against the pricks of custom. It would be too much to expect the attitude of committees to be changed too rapidly, though we believe they are becoming more reasonable on this point.

But we do recommend that pulpit committees, when men write in their own behalf, *recognize their honesty, and give them just as fair and serious consideration as others.*

We further believe that something like the following would be a practical and effective service: When a pastor believes that he should make a change, let him, in addition to having his name suggested by friends in two or three places, *write in his own interest to two or three others.* This will help extend the custom of "direct primaries," and the results may be surprising. It may be found that manifestly the Lord is leading when people are open and aboveboard quite as much as when the name of a candidate is surreptitiously introduced to a committee.

There will always be some ministers who do not need to seek a change, but who are always sought after. We are not dealing with the unusual, but with the usual situation. There will always be men in every walk of life who are in demand, who never have to apply for a position. Our practice should be adapted to the majority, not the minority, of cases.

Inasmuch as the practice of writing in one's own

interest is subject to abuse at the hands of unworthy men, it is well for those writing to ask one or two friends to write the committee also, and to say to the committee that these friends have been asked to do this service. If a candidate has no sponsors whose word would be of weight with the committee, he can hardly expect serious consideration anyway; and by having one's friends add their commendation the committee is given a fuller idea of one's capacities and personality, is saved time and labor in looking up the man, and is better able to discriminate between the applicants. We believe that candidates owe committees this cooperation.

Committees should regard applications as confidential and not embarrass the applicant on his field by such inquiries as will complicate his relations with his present church. While a pastor has a perfect right to be open to a call, the church is usually upset in its mind if the brethren know he is definitely considering a change.

Unwise Policies. Some committees decide, "We will not consider taking a successful pastor away from another church"; others say, "We will not consider any man who is out of the pastorate." Neither position is well taken.

A successful pastor of a live church may be at just the point in his ministry where a call to another church would be a great relief to him and an indication to him that he ought to leave a work that is

telling on his nerves and general health. It is better for the committee to unite on the man they want and, unless there is some very special reason why injustice would be done a sister church by luring away the pastor, to put it up to the pastor himself to decide the matter. He will be better qualified to decide than will the committee.

A minister, temporarily out of the pastorate, may be out for one or more of a hundred honorable reasons. It is nothing less than gross injustice for committees to take such an attitude as will rule all "churchless pastors" out of consideration. Committees should recognize their duties to both churches and candidates. The ministry is *dependent upon the sense of fairness and square dealing* on the part of committees. They have the right to expect it. To give them less is sin.

The above remarks apply as well to the treatment of ministers who may have been in business temporarily. Ill health of self or family, settlement of an estate, care of parents, or one of many other causes may have been responsible for a man being out of the ministry. We shall deal at greater length with the subject of the "churchless pastor" in the following section.

The Man Out of a Job. What is the standing of a man out of the pastorate, and what are his chances of securing a call?

It must be admitted that the attitude of most

churches and committees gives little encouragement to a man to give up one pastorate before he secures another. It makes little difference who the man is or what his record has been; he is usually considered guilty of some weakness or failure until he can prove himself innocent, while the prejudices of committees and their unwillingness to take the trouble to ascertain the simple facts of the case preclude the possibility of a man's establishing his right to consideration in most cases. This situation would be ludicrous were it not so often tragic and so exceedingly unjust. It results in men's holding on to pastorates months and even years after they would gladly relinquish them if there were any assurance that they would be given fair consideration while temporarily without a charge. We are simply deceiving ourselves and wronging good men when we assume that "there must be something the matter" with a man who is out of the pastorate. As long as committees continue to take this attitude, so long will they be propagating conditions which are responsible for pastors' hanging on to churches which are going down on their hands and breaking their spirits. It would be a refreshing thing to know of a committee announcing that *it would consider only men who were out of the pastorate*. We believe results would justify the experiment. Present practice perpetuates conditions which are bad for both pastors and churches. One State secretary writes that the man out of the

pastorate "should be given the greater consideration."

Dealings with Candidates

One Man at a Time. Shall churches consider but one man at a time? That is, shall the committee, having decided that, as far as they can judge, Mr. A would be a suitable man for the pastorate of their church, invite him to occupy the pulpit, or to consider the pastorate without candidacy, on the understanding that the question of calling him would be settled without bringing him into competition with any one else?

The answer of men of experience and leadership is practically unanimous in the affirmative. This does not mean that the pulpit committee itself should not have more than one man in mind at a time. They will naturally canvass several possibilities in their minds, but should enter into definite negotiations with or *bring before the church only one man at a time.*

It is best for the church, because it obviates the possibility of the church becoming divided over rival candidates. If two or more men appear before the church, each will have drawn to himself a group of people who are sure he is the one and only man for the pastorate. Very often this results either in the church becoming much divided over the matter, or in its being necessary to drop the names of all and start anew.

It is best for the candidate, because it makes it unnecessary for him to wait many weeks or months to know the outcome of his visit. He can deal more fairly with other openings. Moreover, the last candidate visiting a field usually has the best chance of being called.

This plan is not based upon the notion that ministers are unwilling to stand fair competition. The fact is that they have to be in competition whether they will or not. They are in competition in the minds of the committee from the start. The committee, in estimating this man and that, and comparing one with the other, is placing them in competition. And that is *where the competition should be confined*. When the name of the man comes before the church, let it be a single issue. A committee is likely to be judicial; a congregation is rarely so.

A half-dozen equally good men can be found to appear before a church. No mistake would be made in calling any one of the six. But if they have all appeared before the church before a vote is taken with reference to any one of them, each one will have his admirers, while there will be a group of people who will vote for the first name suggested or for the candidate of one group or another for reasons of friendship. And the church can easily be drawn into an unhappy strife and an unfortunate division. This has been too common an experience for us to regard the warning lightly. Let one man

appear before the church. Then let the church decide whether to call him or not without reference to any other name. The claim that if a church hears three or four candidates, it will be better satisfied with the one chosen, is not substantiated by experience, except in sporadic instances.

One Church at a Time. Shall a candidate deal with but one church at a time? Beyond a certain point, yes; up to that point he may honorably be in communication with more than one church.

A candidate's position and that of the church are not in every respect the same. A church can afford to take several months in securing a pastor—that is, from an economic standpoint—but a minister may have to settle his problem within a few weeks.

Now, if he is dealing with the church at B——, and has an appointment to preach for them in a month's time, and then after a couple of weeks the church votes not to call him, he has lost five or six weeks and has nothing in view unless he has arranged to supply some other church.

After he has been at B——, however, and has allowed his name to be considered as the only candidate, he should not allow any other church to extend a call to him until he has heard definitely from the church, although he is at liberty to correspond with another committee and even to preach for another congregation. If he is but one of several candidates at B——, that church can have no

grounds for objecting to his dealing with several churches at the same time.

It is the predominantly strong opinion that, as far as the candidate has control of the circumstances, he should not allow more than one church to call him at the same time. But it should be remembered in this connection that men do occasionally receive two calls at the same time without having encouraged them or acted unfairly toward either church concerned.

Writing to the Candidate. When a pulpit committee writes to a minister inviting him to visit the church with a view to the pastorate, the following facts should be stated:

1. The Policy of the Church. If the church purposes to hear several candidates before voting upon any one, the candidates should be informed. If dealings are with but one man at a time, that fact should be clearly stated. Committees are very negligent in giving information on this point. If a minister does not wish to be one of several to be voted on at the same time, he can decline the invitation. But preachers do not relish the idea of competition of this sort as a rule, and yet find it hard to withdraw after accepting an invitation and learning the policy of the church when they arrive on the field.

2. The Remuneration for the Day. No apology or explanation need be made for specifying this information. Every minister needs to know it, and

should know it before he accepts the invitation, not afterward. Not infrequently the remuneration does not cover the cost of travel and of supply for his own pulpit. Ministers usually assume that the amount will be sufficient, but it often proves to be a gratuitous assumption, and it is not considered "good form" to ask about it. Therefore the amount should be named. State the matter simply, as for example: "The remuneration for the day will be fifteen dollars, besides traveling expenses, and entertainment while with us."

Traveling expenses should always be added. It is to be remembered that Sunday is the minister's income-producing day; and if he is given twenty-five dollars, from which he must pay twelve dollars or fifteen dollars for expense of travel, his income for the week is very limited if he is out of the pastorate temporarily. Of course a less amount may reasonably be paid a man who is visiting a church as candidate while still pastor on another field in many cases; but as a practice the same amount should be paid, because the man still in the pastorate who has to secure a supply, is most likely to need to get a man who is out of the pastorate and to whom a decent amount should be paid as his preaching income for the week.

Large churches frequently ask ministers to come several hundred miles, consuming three days in travel and service, and pay the man only twenty dollars or twenty-five dollars, out of which he must

pay more than half for traveling expenses. These are not imaginary cases of what might happen, but records of actual instances. It is easier for several hundred people to pay fifteen dollars than for one man—and he a preacher—to do it.

Candidates should never offer or agree to visit a church merely for expenses, *except for rare and obvious reasons*. For example, a man living at a great distance from a vacant church, and wishing to locate in that section for family or other reasons, might be willing to accept merely his expenses, and it would be reasonable for him to do so, since he is the one desiring the change. But it would not be proper for the committee to *ask* him to come for his expenses. A candidate should no more be expected to give a church a Sunday's services and his income-producing day for the week than a clerk should be expected to give a week's work while he is on trial for a permanent position. But that is what preaching for expenses amounts to.

As to rate of compensation, there is no standard, except as each church makes and maintains its own. It often happens that churches take the opportunity to save money during the interim between pastorates, and offer visiting ministers an unreasonably small compensation. It may be perfectly honest, though not highly creditable, for a church of five hundred members to pay ten dollars a Sunday for supplies; but the supply should be informed of the rate before he accepts the invitation.

No church ought to ask a man to supply its pulpit for less than his expense of travel and supply for his pulpit, or if he is not in the pastorate, ten dollars and expenses. If there is but one service for the day, that should make no difference; the minister has to use his whole income-producing day, and should be paid on that basis, not on the number of words uttered.

In general, the remuneration should be from fifty per cent to seventy per cent of the weekly salary paid to the regular pastor. Some men say the rule should be one per cent of the annual salary per Sunday. Others say sixty per cent of weekly salary, at least. Thus, a church paying a salary of \$1,500 would pay either one per cent, or fifteen dollars per Sunday, or two-thirds of the weekly salary of thirty dollars, which would be twenty dollars. The condition of the church finances will determine which of the two amounts a certain church will pay.

3. Salary Paid by the Church. This is an important item of information, and is not as mercenary a consideration as the suggestion might imply. While pastors are not money-grabbers, most of them have a standard of obligation already established and cannot afford to consider a field which involves further financial sacrifice; and except for special reasons, such as health or family conditions, there is no reason why they should think themselves called upon to do so. Sometimes it happens that a minister goes as a candidate to a church of larger

membership than his present charge, on the supposition that the salary is at least as large as the one he is receiving. After he reaches the field he finds that, because of building debt or other conditions, the salary is actually less and the cost of living is more. It is awkward, then, for him to bring up the question of salary; it practically always "jars" one or more members of the committee, and almost always he will be accused of lusting after the flesh-pots of Egypt if he hesitates or declines. "Safety first" suggests that the salary should be stated in the beginning of negotiations.

Treatment of Candidate While on the Field. Committees should be very careful as to their treatment of the candidate while he is visiting the field. This is a rather more important phase of the committee's work than is commonly thought.

If a committee makes a candidate feel that he is welcome, and if he is put at ease by the little attentions which cost nothing more than thoughtfulness, he will give a better account of himself in his pulpit work and in general impression of personality. It is not suggested that committees "fuss" over candidates or overload them with attentions, but that the conditions of their visits be made as agreeable as possible. Remember that the candidate is in unfamiliar surroundings and in a situation that at best cannot fail to be more or less disconcerting.

Candidates should also remember that they are guests, and that they owe some duties to their hosts. They should go half-way in the matter.

Sometimes a candidate has been embarrassed and his chances of a call destroyed by being entertained exclusively by some one who represents a faction in the church.

Paying the Supply. Pulpit supplies should be paid promptly. Church treasurers should never fail in this matter. Do not wait till the minister gets home and then send him a check. He is likely to need the money in getting home, and yet he does not wish to reveal the limitations of his ready money.

If he is paid by check the treasurer should offer to cash the check before he leaves town. If he is paid in cash it should not be in "chicken-feed," taken directly from the collection baskets, but in bills or gold.

A good plan is to pay the visiting preacher after the morning service. This relieves his mind of any anxiety lest it be forgotten. It should not be done in a conspicuous way, yet it need not be so secret and apologetic a transaction as it is often made. The treasurer should be a cheerful person (if possible), and in dealing with the preacher should not take a patronizing attitude nor act as though "paying off the help." Don't shake hands with the preacher and leave a crumpled bill in his hand,

as though this was a matter of charity, or a "hand-out" of which both parties ought to be ashamed.

Playing Fair. Both candidates and committees should maintain the highest ideals in their relations together. A candidate should not "play" with committees or churches, keeping them waiting for replies while pitting one church against another, seeking a call from a church for the sake of a leverage with his present charge, or for "boosting his stock," or acting in any way insincerely or unfairly. If he gives his word to accept a call, if it is extended by the church, he is in honor bound to accept it. The time for debate has passed. When a man says he "will give *favorable* consideration" to a call a committee understands that he will accept. If he does not mean to commit himself, he should say he "will give it *serious* consideration," and should be sure that the *committee so understands* him.

Committees, on the other hand, should not play with the interests of candidates. The candidate is largely in the hands of the committees, and men may be very unfairly treated by thoughtless or short-sighted committees.

Candidates should cooperate with committees in dealing fairly with brother ministers. For example, Mr. Smith visits a certain church, and after preaching and a conference with the committee, it is mutually understood that the committee intends to recommend his name and that he will undoubt-

edly be called. The following Sunday, however, before the business meeting of the church has been held for extending the call, Mr. Jones preaches merely as a supply. Jones is a "whirlwind preacher," sweeps the congregation off its feet, and on the spot the people demand that he be called. Jones should not allow his name to be considered, even though Smith should be rejected. He is bound by every consideration of fraternity to keep out of the situation and deal honorably by his brother. The pulpit committee should inform Jones of the situation in advance, so that he may not unwittingly do an unfraternal act. Committees should have a *supply* who is *unavailable as a candidate* for the pulpit on the Sunday intervening between the visit of a candidate and the business meeting for action on the matter of a call. To do otherwise is practically to introduce another candidate, or at least to weaken the enthusiasm of some people for the man recommended.

Committees are often so considerate of the feelings of the candidate that they fail to deal frankly with him. In their desire to "let him down easy," they mislead him into the hope and belief that he is to be called. When no call comes he is likely to feel hurt or even bitter over it.

Treat the candidate as a man among men, not as a person of indeterminate classification. Meet him as a committee some time during his stay. It is a good plan, wherever feasible, to meet together

before the first Sunday to become acquainted socially and to wear off some of the feeling of strangeness on both sides. A minister can preach better to people he knows even slightly, and one social meeting gives him a small constituency in the congregation who have begun to know him and are not altogether critical in their attitude. Too frequently candidates reach their appointments late Saturday, meet only their hosts and family that evening, and have a congregation of entire strangers on Sunday.

As to the condition of the church, it is not always easy to know just what to tell a candidate and what to say nothing about. How far shall any lack of harmony be revealed? What shall be told as to general conditions and prospects?

In the first place, it may be said that it is not necessary for a candidate to know all the facts, nor all the discouraging things, about a church. Some things are better left for him to discover. Knowledge of the whole condition of most fields "doth make cowards of us all." Some unpleasant things he may never find out—they may be cured by his ministry; and other things he can better handle after he has been on the field a while. "What he doesn't know won't hurt him" or discourage him.

It may also be said that the various members of a committee are inclined to picture the situation optimistically or pessimistically according to their temperaments.

On the other hand, a committee ought not to cover up any facts a candidate has a right to know as a determining or important factor in his estimate of the conditions and opportunities of the field, nor should they give him a false impression of conditions. If there is a chronic difficulty or a serious temporary split or factionalism in the church, he should be informed. If there is some condition which vitally affects the work, but which no stranger could discover in one visit, he should not be left in ignorance of it.

The financial condition should be fully revealed—how much indebtedness, if any, either mortgage or floating debt the church has, together with the general financial condition.

Candidates should be told by the committee just when the church will take action as to a call. Definiteness as to this matter is of much value to the minister. And he should be informed as to the vote after the meeting, whether favorable or unfavorable, so that he may govern his actions accordingly.

Presenting a Candidate's Name to the Church. When the members of the pulpit committee have agreed upon the name they wish to present to the church, they should stand by their recommendation, not in any partizan spirit, but in loyalty to the candidate. Except in the case of unusual preachers who are good candidates, there will nearly always

be some in the church who are not greatly impressed with the candidate. The great and constant marvel is that with the diverse temperaments and the preferences for one style of preaching or another found in every congregation, it should be possible for candidates to appeal strongly to so large a portion of the people. Now the members of the committee, having had a better chance to satisfy themselves as to the man's qualifications, should give him the benefit of their full support wherever it may be needed to convince some hesitating brother or sister. Tell the people freely some of the things learned about the candidate which convinced the committee, apart from his preaching, that he was a good man for the pastorate. Be prepared to answer any ordinary question in the minds of the people which may be pertinent to the consideration. And do not let petty criticisms of the manner, dress, or personal characteristics of the candidate assume undue importance, if they are presented at all.

Unanimous Calls. Calls to pastors should be made unanimous, if possible. That is, if a candidate receives, say, fifty votes, and there are ten who vote against the call, the ten should afterward vote to make the call unanimous, provided their vote was a matter of judgment merely, or preference for another man, and was not based upon the belief that the candidate was morally unworthy.

"A unanimous call" means, not that everybody was in favor of calling on the first ballot, but that the minority accepts the judgment of the majority, and will unite in making the pastorate a success. Committees will use their best judgment in informing the candidate whether the first call was unanimous or not. Only in rare instances will a wise minister accept a call which is other than unanimous.

Informal Ballots. A good plan, where there is doubt as to the sentiment with respect to a candidate, is first to vote on the name *informally*. That is, let it be understood that the first vote taken will simply reveal the sentiment of the members toward calling the man, but will not itself constitute a call. Let the vote be by ballot, in which case each one will be free to express himself. If it is found that, of fifty votes cast, the candidate receives them all, the vote can be made formal, either by ballot or otherwise, according to the by-laws of the church. If it is found that out of fifty votes there are several negative, the church can proceed as seems best, dropping the name if the opposition is significant or winning the minority to agreement and a unanimous call on a formal ballot, if the dissent is not serious.

Action "on the Spot." It has been the experience of many churches to have a candidate request

that action calling him to the pastorate be taken immediately after his first sermon, or, at the latest, after the evening service, on the representation that he was in demand elsewhere and must be called then or never. Sometimes the committee has "called the bluff," and has sent the man on his way *not* rejoicing. Occasionally, it is true, there is a reason why the church should act at the time of the candidate's visit, if the committee has become thoroughly familiar with his record and convinced of his fitness before he preaches. But this is exceptional, and a candidate's insistence on action being taken "on the spot" should bar him from further consideration. A church may properly act at once; a candidate may not properly request such action, except under very unusual circumstances, which should admit of no question as to propriety. It is proper, however, for a candidate to request that action be not delayed unreasonably, and, if the by-laws of the church allow it, to ask that action be taken at the next midweek meeting, provided the committee has had sufficient opportunity to investigate.

Getting a Representative Vote. Churches should make it a point of duty to see that when a call is extended the vote should fairly represent the whole church. A church of five hundred members should not extend a call by a vote of thirty or forty members. There may be no opposition to the candidate,

but the man should be made to feel that the whole church is interested in the call and will give him welcome. No definite proportion of the membership can be suggested as sufficient to make a call representative. Circumstances determine that point. Committees know when they can assure a minister that the call represents the entire church.

Questionnaires to Candidates. During recent years committees in various parts of the country have sent out questionnaires to men whose names have come to their notice as possible pastors.

Theoretically there seems to be no serious objection to this practice, provided the committees limit their questions to significant matters, and do not become impertinent and petty in their inquiries. The questionnaire, however, does not seem to be well thought of by either pastors or secretaries, the chief reason being that it elicits little valuable information. A man can in most cases answer the questions truthfully without giving a real line on his character and ability. The most genuine and worthy men will give a meager and even unfaithful account of themselves for very modesty, while any rascal can give a good account and estimate of himself on paper.

If questionnaires are to be used they are likely to be most useful when sent to the candidate's friends. But there is danger of overdoing this, and committees will do well to use them sparingly.

One secretary says they "are neither wise, desirable, nor profitable." A pastor writes, "They are a lot of bosh."

On the whole, our observation is that these questionnaires are sent out usually by committees who are sincerely desirous of doing thorough work, and they should be so regarded. On the one hand, candidates should not resent them; on the other, committees should not value them too highly.

IV

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Advertising

WITHIN a very few years the practice of paid advertising in denominational papers, both by vacant churches and "vacant" pastors has increased perceptibly.

Viewed from a certain angle this is a hopeful sign. It indicates that some men have had the courage of their conviction that a frank and open course is an honorable one, and have been willing to pioneer along this line.

On the other hand, committees are naturally shy of a man who advertises, and it is doubtful whether the few independent spirits will be able to make any headway against a strong sentiment that the dignity and essential character of the ministry are cheapened and commercialized in this way.

The announcement by a committee that the pulpit is vacant is not open to just the same objections as the candidate's announcement, but the practical outcome seems to be to multiply the number of "undesirables" who make application.

Some denominational papers render valuable service by recording without comment the resigna-

tions and settlements of pastors once a month or oftener. This partially answers the purpose of an advertisement and is probably more consonant with the prevailing sense of the fitness of things among pastors and committees in general.

Trial Pastorates

Trial pastorates of from three to six months are variously regarded, some men saying they are little better than "trial marriages," others that they frequently turn out happily for both parties.

Facts certainly show that the trial pastorate has worked well in many instances, and there are cases where it is the wise plan apparently. As an exceptional expedient, it may well be kept in mind by committees; but as a common method it is not likely to become wide-spread, for very practical reasons. Few men are willing to give up a sure position for an uncertainty, and financially it is a possibility in most cases for unmarried preachers only.

Demand for Young Pastors

It is a hopeful sign that the demand for young pastors on the part of the churches seems to be decreasing. While it is true that there is a lessened insistence on having men fresh from the seminary, much is still to be desired in the matter of setting a maximum age limit. There is too great a disposition to say, "We will not consider any man over forty-five years of age for our church."

Committees may help this general sentiment by refusing to set arbitrary limits as to age in considering men.

Associational Cooperation

Much valuable assistance is rendered where Associations or other voluntary groups of churches have committees, to whom the local pulpit committees may turn for information and cooperation. Very often these larger committees have information which is of value either in protecting the church from unworthy men or in putting them into touch with available ministers.

The Ohio Baptist Pastors' Conference has asked its State Convention to appoint a Standing Committee on Pastoral Supply, whose duties shall be, as outlined by the Conference, as follows:

(a) To secure the appointment in each Association, as far as possible, of a committee that may advise and aid pastorless churches in that Association in the selection of a pastor;

(b) To render what assistance it can to the associational committees;

(c) To ascertain and file for reference data touching the qualifications and character of both churches and ministers;

(d) To render assistance in finding fields to ministers who apply for it, and who file with the committee such data as may be required to guide it in its work;

(e) To withhold assistance and encouragement from men who are known to be unworthy of confidence or morally corrupt.

Don'ts for Committees

Don't think you must find a perfect man for pastor of your church. The supply is limited, and your church would not want him if he were found.

Don't think you have got a perfect man when you do get a pastor. Some churches want to eat their pastors up when they first come; later they wish they had.

Don't expect a candidate to say he will accept a call unless you are prepared to guarantee a call. It's like asking a young lady if she would marry you in case you should ask her.

Don't give a candidate the impression he is to be called, if you know that enthusiasm for him has failed to appear.

Don't try to see how small a salary a man will accept.

Don't set an age limit for your candidates. It introduces a false standard. Some men are old at thirty; others are young at sixty.

Don't think that only men with national reputations are big enough for your church. Committees should have the "seeing eye" which recognizes "comers" before the world has heard much of them. It's a great thing for a church and a man to grow big together.

Don't neglect to find out all you can about a candidate, because it will cost a few dollars or some expenditure of time.

Don't estimate a man by his record at one place alone, unless that is his first charge.

Don't neglect to notify a candidate as to the action of the church, whether favorable or not. He should not be left in uncertainty and compelled to find out in some roundabout way.

Don't forget to see that some one is designated to look out for the candidate while he is in the church building, introducing him, etc.

Don't think that a man who is out of the pastorate is unworthy of consideration.

Don't let a man become the candidate of a "boss" or a faction of the church. Such sponsorship is a handicap to a pastor.

Don't assume the church's responsibility.

Don't speak of "hiring" a pastor, nor of his "wages." Wages are based on service rendered. Pastors' salaries are confessedly not commensurate with service rendered, but are based upon the financial ability of the churches.

Don't take up with strangers as candidates. We are enjoined to entertain strangers, and are encouraged thereto by the experience of many who "have thereby entertained angels unawares." We should still entertain them, but not turn over positions of leadership to them. There is a difference between taking a stranger in and having him take you in.

Don't advertise a man as a candidate in the local papers.

Don't disregard warnings as to men's characters.

Don't base judgment on any single quality in a candidate.

Don't overlook a man because he is well known.

Don't feel obliged to consider every name suggested.

Don't call a man who has a bad financial record.

Don't invite a man to preach for you unless you *have reason to believe* he would make you a good pastor. He may have such personal magnetism that, after he has preached, the demand of the people that he be called cannot be denied.

Don't call a man because he will accept a small salary. Probably he isn't worth it.

Don't forget to open and close all meetings of the committee with prayer. More misfits are "wrought by (lack of) prayer than this world dreams of."

Don't think that these suggestions are made in a captious or faultfinding spirit.



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